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DEVELOPED WORLD'S "SILVER MARKET" OFFERS OPPORTUNITIES FOR U.S. FOOD SALES

WASHINGTON—For a U.S. food exporter, targeting sales toward the over-60 crowd—the “silver market”—can mean sales opportunities if products are positioned correctly, according to an article in the January issue of AgExporter Magazine, published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Foreign Agricultural Service.

In the article, five U.S. agricultural attaches and trade officers analyze the potential for U.S. food sales to France, Germany, Spain, Britain, and Japan in terms of their increasingly older populations.

By the year 2000, one in five people in developed countries will be over the age of 60, according to United Nations statistics. By the year 2025, that figure will rise to one in four. With a growing segment of older consumers, U.S. agricultural exporters are rethinking their marketing strategies for the next generation.

In France, for example, older consumers also will be demanding healthier foods. Low-fat, low-cholesterol and sugar-free food products, enriched with vitamins and proteins, are expected to continue to grow in popularity among the silver market crowd, according to Ed Porter, the U.S. agricultural attache in Paris. French senior citizens are becoming as quick as the younger generation to adapt to new food products such as low-fat yogurt and convenience foods, says Porter. Special dietary food products will continue to be popular, but what the senior generation doesn’t want is a product advertised as “geriatric.” Porter advises U.S. food exporters to stress the high-quality, good-for-your-health image of a product. Product convenience including ease of preparation also is important in making sales.

In Germany, where 25 percent of the population will be over 60 years old by the year 2000, older consumers enjoy purchasing power three times higher than that of the average 20-year-old, reports Dale Good, U.S. agricultural trade officer in Hamburg. Good predicts a growing German market for higher quality food products. Products with a high degree of convenience, such as frozen foods and ready meals, are at the top of many German seniors’ shopping lists. Health and nutrition also are

important factors to older consumers in Germany, where there is a high acceptance of health and dietetic foods, as well as low-fat, low-salt and low-sugar products.

In Spain, consumers are fairly conservative in their eating habits, says Richard McDonnell, U.S. agricultural counselor in Madrid. Most Spanish consumers value fresh foods, so that prepared, frozen or canned foods are not a good bet in the Spanish market. But fresh fruits and vegetables are popular, and McDonnell predicts excellent prospects for sales of natural fruit juices to Spain's older generation.

When it comes to targeting food sales to the silver market in Britain, the most popular products are fresh fish, meat, fresh vegetables, breakfast cereals, brown bread, half-fat butter, sunflower oil margarine, cheese, fruit juices and stir-fried foods, according to Christine Chapman, a marketing specialist at the U.S. agricultural trade office in London. Microwaveable foods have sales potential in Britain, says Chapman.

In Japan, too, seniors are a growing market segment. Fifteen million Japanese, about 12 percent of the population, were over the age of 65 in 1989. By the year 2000, that percentage will rise to 16 percent. But products specifically tailored for the older population are not yet commonly found in Japanese retail markets. One reason older consumers in Japan offer less opportunity at present for U.S. foods is that they are fairly traditional eaters, according to Suzanne Hale, director of the FAS High-Value Products Services Division and a former trade officer in Tokyo. "But the Japanese interest in health has been helpful to U.S. exporters in marketing foods with a healthy image, including fresh fruits," says Hale.

Lynn K. Goldsbrough (202) 382-9442

Issued: Dec. 20, 1990

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USDA PROTECTS 20 NEW PLANT VARIETIES

WASHINGTON, Dec. 21—The U.S. Department of Agriculture has issued certificates of protection to developers of 20 new varieties of seed-reproduced plants, including corn, cotton, red fescue, tall fescue, annual ryegrass, perennial ryegrass and wheat.

Kenneth H. Evans, of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said developers of the new varieties will have the exclusive right to reproduce, sell, import, and export their products in the United States for 18 years. Certificates of protection are granted after a review of the breeders' records and claims that each new variety is novel, uniform and stable.

The following varieties have been issued certificate of protection:

- the J8606 and the W8555 varieties of corn, developed by the Northrup King Co., Minneapolis, Minn.;
- the 4N506 variety of corn, developed by Funk Seeds International, Greensboro, N. C.;
- the PHJ31 and the PHJ33 varieties of corn, developed by Pioneer Hi-Bred International Inc., Johnston, Iowa;
- the Kings Acala M5 variety of cotton, developed by V. T. Walhood and Westlake Farms Inc., Bakersfield, Calif.;
- the Southland M1 variety of cotton, developed by the Southland Seed Co., Slaton, Texas;
- the HS-46 variety of cotton, developed by the HyPerformer Seed Co., Memphis, Tenn.;
- the Deltapine 51 variety of cotton, developed by the Delta & Pine Land Co., Scott, Miss.;
- the Coyote and the Green varieties of cotton, developed by Sally Vreseis Fox, Wasco, Calif.;
- the Victor variety of red fescue, developed by Mommersteeg International B.V., the Netherlands;
- the Thoroughbred variety of tall fescue, developed by Pickseed West Inc., Tangent, Ore.;
- the RustMaster variety of annual ryegrass, developed by Daehnfeldt Inc., Albany, Ore.;
- the Pinnacle variety of perennial ryegrass, developed by Normarc Inc., Tangent, Ore.;
- the Surprise variety of perennial ryegrass, developed by Cebeco Zaden B.V., the Netherlands;

—the Barrage variety of perennial ryegrass, developed by Barenbrug Holland B.V., the Netherlands;

—the Stallion and the Aquarius varieties of perennial ryegrass, developed by KWS-AG, W. Germany; and

—the Cashup variety of wheat, developed by Columbia Basin Seeds, Moses Lake, Wash.

The certificates of protection for the Kings Acala M5 cotton variety, the Surprise and Barrage ryegrass varieties, and the Cashup wheat variety are being issued to be sold by variety name only as a class of certified seed, and to conform to the number of generations specified by the owner.

The plant variety protection program is administered by AMS and provides marketing protection to developers of new and distinctive seed-reproduced plants ranging from farm crops to flowers.

Carolyn Coutts (202) 447-8998

#

USDA SCIENTISTS' CHRISTMAS PRESENTS COULD BE PEST-KILLING WASPS

WASHINGTON, Dec. 24—A Soviet scientist played Santa Claus when he flew here last week to sign a new accord on joint Soviet-U.S. Department of Agriculture explorations in 1991 for natural enemies of insect pests.

Nikolai Popov of Kishinev, Moldavia, brought hundreds of larvae of the apple codling moth for scientists at USDA's Agricultural Research Service.

ARS scientists hope the larvae contain parasitic wasps that can get the upper hand on the moth, the major pest of apples in the U.S.

“This pest is the proverbial ‘worm in the apple,’” said Richard Soper of ARS. “But parasitic wasps lay their eggs on or inside the worm. Young wasps that emerge from the eggs then feed on the worm.”

The wasps don't sting people or animals, added Soper. Based in Beltsville, Md., he is national program leader for ARS research on natural or biological pest controls.

Friday, the 1991 exploration agreement was signed in Beltsville by Popov and David Kincaid, ARS director of international activities. Popov

is vice-director of the USSR's All-Union Institute of Biological Methods in Plant Protection in Kishinev.

The accord provides for joint explorations to the following areas:

- * The eastern USSR for natural enemies of the Russian wheat aphid—a pest of cereal grains that has spread through the western U.S. since its first discovery in this country, in Texas, in 1986.

- * The region of Alma Ata, Kazakhstan, USSR, for parasites of pear psylla and apple codling moths. Alma Ata, believed to be a native region of apple and pear trees, is a promising place to search for natural enemies of pests that attack these trees.

- * The American southwest for natural enemies of Colorado potato beetles. “These are pests of potatoes, tomatoes, eggplant and sweet peppers in both countries,” Soper said, “and they have developed considerable resistance to chemical insecticides.”

- * Missouri, Arkansas and the northeastern U.S. for natural enemies of fall webworm—a major pest of young fruit tree orchards and ornamental trees in the Soviet Union, according to Popov.

Popov was met Thursday (Dec. 20) at Washington's National Airport by Soper and Beltsville entomologist Jack Coulson. That afternoon in Beltsville, Coulson gave the moth larvae to Kenneth Swan of the ARS Beneficial Insects Introduction Research Laboratory in Newark, Del.

Swan drove the larvae to Newark, where the lab has an insect quarantine facility. Any wasps that emerge from the larvae will be kept there until their identities are confirmed, he said.

About ten of the larvae actually are dead “mummies” that contain *Elasmus albipennis* wasps reared in a lab at the Kishinev institute.

The rest of the moth larvae—200 to 400, said Swan—were collected from traps in various USSR locations last summer. The traps were placed by ARS entomologists Thomas Unruh of Yakima, Wash., and Herfried Hoyer of Behoust, France. These may contain other promising parasites, Unruh said.

When the wasps clear quarantine and a bigger supply is reared at Newark, Soper said, they will likely be sent to Unruh for studies at the ARS Fruit and Vegetable Insect Research Unit in Yakima.

“It's always an open question whether a potential biocontrol agent will prove useful,” Unruh said. “But if any of the parasitic wasps pass

muster, they could give apple growers another alternative to using insecticides.”

Jim De Quattro (301) 344-3648

#

SUBSEQUENT HOLDERS OF EXPIRED CCC CERTIFICATES MAY EXCHANGE THEM FOR CASH

WASHINGTON, Dec. 24—Subsequent holders (purchasers) of commodity certificates issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Commodity Credit Corporation may now exchange certain expired certificates for cash under similar rules that apply to original holders.

Authorization for the exchange is contained in the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990.

The cash exchange may be made subject to the following limitations:

- The commodity certificate must have been purchased by the subsequent holder no later than Jan. 1, 1990.

- A subsequent holder may not receive a total cash payment of more than \$1,000.

- Subject to the \$1,000 limitation, subsequent holders of expired commodity certificates are eligible to receive:

- Eighty-five percent of the face value of the certificate during the first 6-month period after the certificate’s expiration date.

- Fifty percent of the face value of the certificate during the 12-month period beginning on the seventh month after the certificate’s expiration date.

- Subsequent holders may not exchange certificates beginning the nineteenth month after the certificate’s expiration date.

- A subsequent holder cannot receive an amount greater than the price paid for each expired certificate.

To obtain a cash payment for expired commodity certificates, the subsequent holder is required to:

- Complete an application (Form CCC-8). Form CCC-8’s are available from the Kansas City Commodity Office by calling (816) 926-6030, or from any local county Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service office.

—Provide evidence of proof of purchase and the price paid for the expired certificate.

—Mail the original expired certificate(s) and proof of purchase with the CCC-8 to:

CCC Expired Certificate Exchange

Attn: Claims and Collections Division, KCCO

Post Office Box 419205

Kansas City, Missouri 64141-6205

Original holders of commodity certificates who wish to receive cash for their certificates must continue to submit their certificates to the county ASCS office which issued the certificate.

To compensate persons whose certificates may decline in value from the Nov. 28 date of enactment of Section 1122 of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990, until implementation of these procedures, the following transitional rules apply:

—Persons who submit applications postmarked no later than Jan. 31, with the following expiration dates will receive payments for certificates, subject to the \$1,000 limitation, as if they had been submitted on Nov. 30:

—Subsequent holders of certificates with expiration dates of May 31, 1989 and June 30, 1989 will receive 50 percent of the certificate's face value.

—Subsequent holders of certificates with expiration dates of May 31, 1990 and June 30, 1990 will receive 85 percent of the certificate's face value.

The Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act only authorized a 180-day period after enactment for subsequent holders to receive this benefit. Therefore, all applications must be postmarked no later than May 28, 1991. All expired certificates received by the KCCO are the property of CCC.

Robert Feist (202) 447-6789

#

ORIENTAL PERSIMMON—HIGH IN VITAMIN C WITHOUT PUCKERY TASTE

WASHINGTON—Orange-red Oriental persimmons have about three times as much vitamin C as citrus, a U.S. Department of Agriculture scientist has found.

USDA's Jerry A. Payne said certain varieties of Oriental persimmons provide 218 milligrams of ascorbic acid per 100 grams of fruit, or up to 363 percent of the recommended daily intake of vitamin C. Citrus—the best-known source of vitamin C—normally contains 40 to 70 milligrams of ascorbic acid per 100 grams of fruit.

Oriental persimmons—two to four inches in diameter—are not to be confused with the smaller, seedier American type that grows wild in the South and is “puckery,” he said.

Payne said the vitamin analyses, done in cooperation with Ron Eitenmiller, University of Georgia, were prompted by research ongoing at the Southeastern Fruit and Tree Nut Research Laboratory at Byron, Ga.

“We knew the fruit to be high in fiber and a good source of potassium and vitamin A, but literature reported only a fair amount of vitamin C. Our evaluations of 15 varieties give higher grades to vitamin C,” Payne reported.

Payne has been growing Oriental persimmons for six years at the Byron lab, which is operated by USDA's Agricultural Research Service.

“We've had good success growing the Oriental persimmon as far north as central Georgia,” he said. “This is unusual, especially since the fruit is as tasty and as sweet as those grown in California, Hawaii and Florida. Cold sensitive, it usually grows best in the warm temperate to subtropical climates of Asia, Europe and the United States.”

“Sugar levels in persimmons grown in Georgia are as high as in fruit grown in California and Japan,” said Samuel D. Senter, research food technologist at the ARS Richard B. Russell Research Center, Athens, Ga.

Payne said Oriental persimmons, widely available from September to December, store well and have “excellent appearance and pleasant flavor.” The fruit can be eaten fresh and used in desserts, fruit salads, juices, jams, jellies, and pies. Also, the fruit can be dried and eaten like candy or frozen and eaten like popsicles.

“Our Fuyu persimmons picked right off the tree are plump, sweet and tasty,” said Roy Lee Smith, a fresh fruit and vegetable grower in Sumter County, Ga. “Some grow to about four inches in diameter.”

Smith has an experimental plot of the Japanese persimmon Fuyu. “We used drip irrigation with time clocks,” he said. “Persimmons don’t need any more care than any other crop; in fact, maybe less.” With regular crop maintenance, he said, disease and pests weren’t problems. To grow a crop from nursery to field harvest takes about three years.

“I’d recommend growing Oriental persimmons as an alternative crop here in the Southeast,” Smith said. “But the market would need to be determined. Timing and selection of the best varieties to grow would be important.”

Native to China and Japan, Oriental and other types of persimmons are grown on almost 1,000 farms on over 2,600 acres in the United States. California, Hawaii and Florida are the major producers. Persimmons sell for \$1.50 to \$2 per pound.

Doris Stanley (301) 344-2767

Issued: Dec. 26, 1990

#

RAINDROPS POINT FINGER AT POLLUTION

WASHINGTON—Each raindrop may not be unique like a snowflake but it can be different enough to tell where it came from, according to a U.S. Department of Agriculture scientist.

Harry B. Pionke said differences in the weights of oxygen atoms in water molecules act as fingerprints for raindrops. “We are tracing the paths of raindrops through soil to groundwater and streams by comparing oxygen atoms in water samples,” he said.

“In the past, we’ve added tracers such as bromide salts or dyes to water,” he said. “This works fine on a plot or small-scale field, but you need to add many tons and run long-term experiments to follow water through an entire landscape or watershed,” said Pionke, a soil scientist with the Agricultural Research Service.

But, he added, “when you want to look at that much land, it’s far more practical and less time-consuming and costly to rely on something that’s already in the water.”

He said the fingerprinting is based on the fact that about 99.8 percent of the oxygen in nature has a weight known as O16. A heavier version—O18—comprises another 0.1 percent, with the rest being atoms of other weights. He said the ratio of O16 to O18 varies in rain from storm to storm, sometimes within a storm and from season to season.

Oxygen atoms increase the accuracy of tracking rainwater because foreign tracer chemicals can escape the water by binding to or degrading in soil, Plonke said. This distorts results. Natural oxygen used as a tracer is part of the water molecule, he said, so it will go wherever water goes.

“That’s important because we must first understand water movement in order to predict ag chemical movement,” he said.

“Without knowing which fields are contaminating groundwater or streams with fertilizers or pesticides, how can you identify problem areas and recommend solutions to farmers?” asked Pionke.

Pionke, research leader at the Northeast Watershed Research Center in University Park, Pa., said he and colleagues have been successfully using oxygen to trace water samples back to recent rainstorms.

He said the research, designed to identify sites causing problems, has received funding under a national water quality initiative. The initiative is a program of federal and state research and technical assistance begun in 1989 by President Bush.

Lab scientists sample water that drains off fields, soil water below crop roots, shallow and deep groundwater and spring and stream water. They pass these samples through a mass spectrometer to separate the oxygen atoms by weight. Then they compare the ratios to those in present and past rainfalls.

Pionke said fingerprinting raindrops will help find the most active land sources of surface runoff to streams and of recharge to groundwater. While the “hot spots” may comprise as little as 10 percent of a watershed, he said, they can contribute most of the runoff.

“Some areas within the watershed are much more important contributors than others,” he said. “If you control pollution in these active areas, you have the best chance of improving the water quality over much of the watershed, at a fraction of the cost of treating the whole watershed.”

Pionke said his center’s work will be coordinated with that of another ARS team at Coshocton, Ohio. “Information gained from this research will be used to develop and verify computer models that predict water

movement," he said. "It will help us choose the most cost-effective prediction techniques and give us the confidence to use them."

C. Richard Amerman, ARS scientific planning advisor, said the computer models and accompanying practical recommendations to come from the national program will help farmers comply with state pollution management programs authorized by the federal Clean Water Act of 1987.

Don Comis (301) 344-2773

Issued: Dec. 27, 1990

#

COWS COULD BE MODEL FOR REDUCING INFANT DEATHS FROM RARE DISEASE

WASHINGTON—A rare—and often fatal—genetic defect seen in human infants has been found for the first time in dairy cattle.

The discovery could bring scientists closer to developing gene therapies in an animal that might be used as a model to study the condition in humans, according to Marcus E. Kehrli, Jr., a veterinary medical officer with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Genetic defects are passed in genes from parents to offspring, and are not transmitted to other cattle, animals or to humans who consume the meat or dairy products. Kehrli discovered the defect, called leukocyte adhesion deficiency or LAD, in cattle. Kehrli is a scientist with USDA's Agricultural Research Service.

Human LAD was first identified by medical researchers in 1982. Eighty cases have been confirmed to date.

Kehrli found the defect in a young heifer calf after she died of unknown causes. His research has shown that white blood cells in Holstein calves with bovine LAD lack a protein called MAC-1. This protein enables specific white blood cells called neutrophils to penetrate blood vessel walls and help fight infections.

Kehrli has begun experiments at the National Animal Disease Center in Ames, Iowa, to identify carrier animals and fix the defect in cows. He and co-workers plan to copy the normal gene and put it into a harmless virus, which will be used to infect bone marrow cells from an affected calf. These infected cells, carrying a copy of the normal gene, will then be placed back in the affected calf.

“If Kehrli’s technique is successful in the cow, medical researchers may use similar therapies with human genes in humans,” said Donald C. Anderson, M.D., at the Baylor College of Medicine and Texas Children’s Hospital in Houston. Anderson aided Kehrli’s studies by screening cow blood for the MAC-1 protein.

Partial correction of LAD in humans has been achieved by bone marrow transplants. But further progress has been slow because of the lack of an animal model.

Researchers at the National Animal Disease Center are developing a diagnostic test to identify the defective gene in bulls before semen from those bulls is used for artificial insemination. Artificial insemination is used in breeding almost 70 percent of all dairy cows in the United States.

The diagnostic test will ultimately aid in preventing animal deaths from infectious diseases. The test should be ready for use in about two years.

A report on Kehrli’s work on LAD appears in the latest issue of “Agricultural Research,” the monthly magazine of the Agriculture Research Service.

Linda Cooke (301) 685-4011

Issued: Dec. 28, 1990

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USDA SEEKS PUBLIC COMMENT ON SOYBEAN PROMOTION AND RESEARCH PROGRAM

WASHINGTON, Dec. 28—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is seeking public comment in establishing the national soybean promotion, research, and consumer information program authorized by the Soybean Promotion, Research, and Consumer Information Act, part of the 1990 Farm Bill.

The request for proposals for the soybean order appeared as a notice in the Dec. 26 Federal Register. Responses to the notice should be sent in duplicate, to be received no later than Jan. 25, to Ralph L. Tapp, chief, Marketing Programs Branch, Livestock and Seed Division, AMS, USDA, Room 2624-S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456.

Based on the proposals USDA will publish a proposed order in the Federal Register. USDA welcomes letters on whether a public meeting should be held on the proposed order during the public comment period.

Additional information on the soybean program, as well as copies of

Additional information on the soybean program, as well as copies of the Dec. 26 Federal Register notice and the Soybean Promotion, Research, and Consumer Information Act, are available by calling (202) 382-1115.

USDA now monitors individually legislated research and promotion programs for beef, cotton, dairy products and milk, eggs, honey, watermelons, pork, potatoes, wool and mohair, honey. The 1990 Farm Bill authorizes similar programs for limes, mushrooms, pecans, and fluid milk.

Clarence Steinberg (202) 447-6179

#

USDA SEEKS PUBLIC COMMENT ON SOYBEAN PROMOTION AND RESEARCH PROGRAM

WASHINGTON—Dec. 31—Secretary of Agriculture Clayton Yeutter today announced the acreage reduction program (ARP) requirements for the 1991 crop of wheat at 15 percent, corn, barley and sorghum at 7.5 percent, upland and extra-long staple (ELS) cotton at 5 percent and oats at zero percent.

Yeutter said, “Today’s announcement is in accordance with the recently enacted Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990. This Act will guide American agricultural farm policy through the 1995 crops. This announcement provides farmers with basic information they will need to plan for the 1991 crop.”

Other program provisions announced today include:

* Signup will begin in early March. Specific dates will be announced later.

* 1991 crop established “target” prices will be:

Wheat (\$/bu)	4.00	Corn (\$/bu)	2.75
Grain sorghum (\$/bu)	2.61	Barley (\$/bu)	2.36
Oats (\$/bu)	1.45	Upland Cotton(\$/lb)	0.729
ELS Cotton (\$/lb)	0.996		

* Advance and estimated deficiency payments will be:

	Est. Payment Rate	Advance Rate
Wheat (\$/bu.)		
a. Winter Wheat Option	1.40	.56
b. Other	1.47	.588
Corn (\$/bu.)	.58	.232
Grain sorghum (\$/bu.)	.56	.224
Barley (\$/bu.)	.47	.124
Oats (\$/bu.)	.15	.06
Upland cotton (\$/lb.)	.10	.04
ELS Cotton (\$/lb.)	.00	.00

—The advance rate is equal to 40 percent of the estimated deficiency payment rate.

—All advance payments will be made in cash.

—As required by the 1990 Act, the advance rate for barley is based on 40 percent of the estimated all barley price. However, the total estimated deficiency payment rate is based on a feed barley price.

* Price support levels and related provisions will be:

Wheat (\$/bu)	2.04	Corn (\$/bu)	1.62
Grain sorghum (\$/bu)	1.54	Barley (\$/bu)	1.32
Oats (\$/bu)	.83	Rye (\$/bu)	1.38
Upland cotton (\$/lb)	.5077	Soybeans (\$/bu)	5.02
Other oilseeds (\$/lb)	.089	Honey (\$/lb)	0.538

—The upland cotton loan rate is for the base quality which will be Strict Low Middling 1-1/16 inch, micronaire 3.5 through 3.6 and 4.3 through 4.9, strength 24 through 25 grams per tex, at average location in the United States.

—Other oilseeds for which price support will be made available are: Sunflower seed, safflower, canola, rapeseed, mustard seed and flaxseed.

—Marketing loan programs are in effect for upland cotton, oilseeds and honey. Under these programs loan deficiency payments (difference between the loan rate and the level at which the loan may be repaid) will

be available to producers who agree to forgo loan eligibility in return for such payments.

* Planting flexibility and related provisions will be:

—Producers may plant crops other than the program crop (wheat, corn, grain sorghum, barley, oats, upland cotton and rice) on up to 25 percent of any participating program crop acreage base (CAB). This acreage will be known as “flex” acreage.

—Permitted crops on flex acreage are: (1) any program crop, (2) any oilseed, (3) any designated industrial or experimental crop, and (4) any other crop except any fruit or vegetable (including potatoes, dry edible beans, lentils and peas).

—The secretary may, however, prohibit the planting of any crop on flex acreage and is required to make available a list of any prohibited crops. A request for public comments will be published in the Federal Register at a later date with regard to what crops, if any, in addition to fruits and vegetables (including potatoes, dry edible beans, lentils and peas) should be prohibited from being planted on this acreage.

—The first 15 percent of the flex acreage will be known as “normal flex acreage” (NFA) and the other 10 percent will be known as “optional flex acreage” (OFA).

—The 1990 Act prohibits the planting of soybeans on OFA if the marketing year prices are estimated to be below 105 percent of the soybean price support level (\$5.27 per bushel). The estimated national average price for soybeans during the 1991/92 marketing year is estimated to exceed 105 percent of the soybean loan rate. Therefore, soybeans may be planted on the OFA.

* Maximum payment acreage and related provisions are:

—The maximum payment acreage (MPA) for each program crop will be the product of multiplying the crop acreage base (CAB) established for a program crop by 85 percent (the other 15 percent is known as “normal flex acres” or “triple base”) less the acreage which is required to be devoted to approved conservation uses under an acreage reduction program (“acreage conservation reserve” or ACR).

—An exception to the payment acreage reduction requirement applies to producers of the 1991 crop of winter wheat that was planted in 1990. Under this exception, producers have the option of waiving the payment acreage reduction provision on the farm if they agree to have the regular deficiency payments determined using a 12-month national average price rather than a 5-month average price.

For purposes of this special provision, a farm will be considered as a winter wheat farm if any winter wheat was planted on such farm for harvest in 1991.

* ARP and related provisions will be:

—As required by the 1990 Act, the amount of land (i.e., ACR) producers will be required to idle under the acreage reduction program (ACR) announced today will be determined by multiplying the ARP percentage times the CAB established for a crop for a farm. Previously, the ACR was determined by multiplying the planted acreage of the program crop by a factor calculated by dividing the announced ARP requirement by the permitted acreage of the commodity.

—The 1990 Act requires a preliminary announcement of the ARP requirement for the 1991 crop of upland cotton as soon as practicable and a final ARP announcement no later than Jan. 1, 1991. A separate announcement of a preliminary and final level of the upland cotton ARP was impracticable. Therefore, today's announcement reflects both the preliminary and final upland cotton ARP requirement.

—For future crop years, the statutory dates for announcing ARP's are:

Wheat	by June 1
Feed grains	by Sept. 30
Upland cotton	
a. preliminary	by Nov. 1
b. final	by Jan. 1

—No paid land diversion program will be offered for any program crop.

* 0,50/92 provisions are as follows:

—Wheat and feed grain producers may devote a portion, or all, of the MPA to conservation uses and be eligible to receive guaranteed deficiency payments on an acreage equal to the payment acreage on the farm for the commodity reduced by an acreage equivalent to 8 percent of the MPA less the actual acreage planted to wheat or feed grains. Such acreage devoted to conservation uses will be known as PAY/92 acreage.

—This program provision will be available to wheat and feed grain producers each year through the 1995 crop.

—Under the 0/92 provisions for wheat and feed grains, producers may devote the PAY/92 acreage (including the 8 percent) to sunflowers, rapeseed, canola, safflower, flaxseed and mustard seed. If producers

choose to plant any of these oilseeds on PAY/92 acreage, they must agree to forgo either (1) deficiency payments on the PAY/92 acreage planted to such oilseed or (2) marketing loan eligibility for such oilseed which is planted on PAY/92 acreage and elsewhere on the farm.

—Upland cotton and rice producers may devote a portion or all of the maximum payment acreage up to 50 percent of such acreage to conservation uses if at least the other 50 percent of such acreage is planted to the program crop. The deficiency payments paid on the acreage devoted to conservation uses less an acreage equivalent to 8 percent of the MPA will be guaranteed at not less than the estimated deficiency payment rate.

—This program provision will be available to upland cotton and rice producers each year through the 1995 crop.

—If producers are prevented from planting the acreage intended for upland cotton and rice and devote this acreage to conservation uses, such acreage will also be eligible for the guaranteed payment if the total of prevented planted acreage plus actual upland cotton and rice plantings are equal to or greater than 50 percent of the MPA for the crop.

—The special minor oilseeds planting provision is not extended to upland cotton and rice.

* Farm program payment yields, except for ELS cotton, will be the same as those established for the 1990 crops. For the 1991 crop and subsequent years, irrigated yields will not be established on any acreage not irrigated prior to the 1991 crop year in accordance with the Statement of Managers accompanying the 1990 Act.

* All counties designated as suitable for growing ELS cotton during the 1990 marketing year are redesignated as eligible for the 1991 marketing year. Additional counties may be designated prior to the final date for enrolling in the 1991 ELS cotton program.

* Producers who certify that no acreage on the farm was planted to the program crop and that any fruit or vegetable planted on the farm was not in excess of normal plantings will have the entire program crop acreage base considered as planted for base retention purposes. This option will be available for nonparticipating program crops. This provision is known as “zero certification”.

* The amount of regular deficiency payments and land diversion payments that a person is entitled to under one or more programs for wheat, feed grains, upland cotton, ELS cotton and rice may not exceed \$50,000, the same as for the 1990 crops.

Also, the total amount of payments that a person is entitled to under one or more programs for wheat, feed grains, upland cotton, rice and oilseeds with regard to (1) any gain realized by a producer from repaying a loan for a commodity at less than the original loan level (i.e., “marketing loan gain”)

(2) any “Findley” emergency compensation payment for wheat and feed grains, and

(3) any loan deficiency payment, will be limited to \$75,000. These payments are also included in an overall payment limitation of \$250,000 per person.

Other provisions concerning payment limitation provisions will be announced later.

Secretary Yeutter said that this is the first major announcement in a series of announcements implementing the 1991 farm programs. Additional details of the 1991 wheat, feed grains, cotton and oilseeds programs and major provisions of the 1991 rice program will be announced later.

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MEAT IMPORTS NOT EXPECTED TO TRIGGER RESTRAINTS IN 1991

WASHINGTON, Dec. 31—Acting Under Secretary of Agriculture Ann M. Veneman today announced that the first-quarter estimate of U.S. meat imports for calendar year 1991 is below the level that would require quotas or restraints on imports under the Meat Import Act of 1979.

Veneman said that, based on U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates of available supplies and marketing plans by major meat exporters, imports of beef and other meats subject to the Act during 1991 should total 1,220 million pounds—about 100 million pounds below the 1991 trigger level, which was set at 1,318.5 million pounds. As a result, import restrictions are not required for 1991 by this estimate.

Through November 1990, meat imports subject to the Act were about 17 percent above the same period in 1989, due mainly to an increase of 217 million pounds or 45 percent in imports from Australia this year, according to Veneman. In 1991, imports from Australia are expected to

decrease moderately, while those from New Zealand are expected to remain at about the same level.

The Meat Import Act of 1979 requires the President to consider restrictions on imports of certain meat items—primarily beef and veal—if a USDA quarterly estimate of meat imports equals or exceeds the trigger level determined by formula in the act.

Imports of Meat Subject to the Meat Import Act

	1987	1988	1989 ¹	1990 ¹
	-----Million pounds-----			
January	44.4	135.6	74.5	90.7
February	138.2	112.3	80.3	97.1
March	84.9	144.8	88.5	115.4
April	146.0	146.6	97.1	118.0
May	103.4	134.7	104.0	76.9
June	135.4	142.7	103.4	100.8
July	181.5	124.4	114.6	121.3
August	137.4	123.0	111.0	122.2
September	158.0	140.4	90.2	137.7
October	153.8	118.7	83.6	99.9
November	86.6	114.2	57.4	96.0
December	90.1	84.9	136.7	3/
Total ²	1,459.7	1,521.3	1,141.2	

¹ Imports from Canada are excluded as a result of the signing of the U.S.-Canada Free Trade Implementation Act of 1988.

² Totals may not add due to rounding.

³ Dec. data are incomplete.

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1991 MILK SUPPORT PRICE UNCHANGED

WASHINGTON, Dec. 31—Secretary of Agriculture Clayton Yeutter today announced that the support price for milk will remain at \$10.10 per hundred-weight for calendar year 1991 for milk with a milkfat content of 3.67 percent—the national average. The equivalent support price for 3.5 percent milkfat content is \$9.90 per hundredweight.

Yeutter said the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990 provides that the price of milk be supported at a rate not less than \$10.10 per hundredweight through 1995.

Under the act, the secretary must increase the support level if annual purchases of surplus milk and dairy products are estimated to be not more than 3.5 billion pounds, milk equivalent, total solid basis. Projected Commodity Credit Corporation purchases for calendar year 1991 are 6.4 billion pounds, milk equivalent, total solids basis.

The price support program for milk is carried out through CCC purchases of butter, cheese and nonfat dry milk. The current purchase prices for these products will also remain unchanged.

CCC-owned dairy products will continue to be available for purchase for unrestricted use at prices which are about 10 percent over the prevailing CCC price support purchase price.

Further terms and conditions for CCC purchases of dairy products are contained in CCC purchase announcements.

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CCC INTEREST RATE FOR JANUARY LOWERED TO 7-1/8 PERCENT

WASHINGTON, Jan. 2—Commodity loans disbursed in January by the U. S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation will carry a 7-1/8 percent interest rate, according to Keith Bjerke, executive vice president of the CCC.

The 7-1/8 percent interest rate is down from December's 7-3/8 percent and reflects the interest rate charged CCC by the U.S. Treasury in January.

Any outstanding 1981 loans and subsequent crop commodity loans and any outstanding facility loans approved and disbursed on or after April 1,

1981 and before Jan. 1, 1991, will accrue interest at a rate of 7-1/8 percent per year during 1991. This interest rate is subject to adjustment each Jan. 1.

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GENETIC SABOTEUR OF VIRUS IS A SATELLITE SHIELD FOR TOMATO PLANTS

WASHINGTON, Jan. 2—Scientists in the United States, Europe and Asia are sabotaging the cucumber mosaic virus. Their weapon is a parasitic natural molecule first discovered at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The parasite, a small nucleic acid called a viral satellite, dooms the virus by swindling it of plant enzymes that both need to multiply, said chemist Jacobus M. Kaper of the Agricultural Research Service.

“Cucumber mosaic virus is the flu bug of the plant world,” he said. “It’s known to attack at least 775 plant species worldwide and is the number one, two or three worst virus in 16 countries.” It attacks numerous crops including tomatoes, peppers, spinach, celery and cowpeas, as well as cucumbers, added Kaper.

“Viral satellites may be nature’s way of preventing the unlimited spread of plant viruses. That means satellites could be used as a new kind of natural tool for battling epidemics of a host of viruses,” said Kaper, at the ARS Microbiology and Plant Pathology Laboratory in Beltsville, Md.

In the U.S., cucumber mosaic virus causes noticable losses mainly in peppers and melons. But severe epidemics occur abroad, like the one that has clobbered Italian tomato, pepper, melon, watermelon, cucumber and squash crops for several years, said Kaper.

“Last year, in the middle of the epidemic in Italy,” he said, “a test in a commercial tomato field gave us the strongest evidence to date that the satellite can ward off cucumber mosaic virus for growers. It was at least 95 percent successful in ‘vaccinating’ plants against the virus.”

He said 40 percent of the unprotected plants died despite pesticide sprays to kill aphids that transmit the disease. That’s the only known control for the virus, and “it’s not much help in an epidemic,” he said.

The satellite is nothing more than a small RNA or ribonucleic acid, he said. Named S-CARNA 5, it is one strain or variant of a group of

molecules known as CARNA 5—short for “cucumber mosaic virus-associated RNA number 5.” The RNA of S-CARNA 5 is 1/25th the size of the virus’ RNA.

Viruses reproduce by taking over a cell’s machinery and commanding it to make the necessary enzymes. But S-CARNA 5 outcompetes cucumber mosaic virus for those enzymes. “It milks the plant of the special enzymes that the virus and satellite both need, so the virus can’t multiply enough to cause symptoms,” he said.

In 1988 in southern Italy, cucumber mosaic virus destroyed an estimated 30,000 acres worth of tomato production—equivalent to about 300,000 tons of tomatoes.

In 1989, Kaper, ARS chemist Marie E. Tousignant and M. S. Montasser of the University of Maryland supplied S-CARNA 5 inside a weak strain of the virus to D. Gallitelli and colleagues at Italy’s University of Bari. About 200 tomato seedlings were inoculated with the satellite and placed in a commercial field in the Basilicata region near the heel of the Italian “boot.”

“Less than 5 percent of the vaccinated plants got virus symptoms,” Kaper said.

Articles giving detailed results of the Italian tests and earlier tests at Beltsville appear in the January 1991 issue of *Plant Disease*.

Kaper is beginning a systematic search of other plant viruses—there are more than 20 major groups—for satellites that may cause disease or be exploited to protect crops. “After all, most of the 30 virus-satellite systems now known were discovered by chance, like CARNA 5,” he said.

Since 1976, when he and ARS colleagues discovered CARNA 5, they have worked to exploit its ability to change the severity of the cucumber mosaic disease, and have been supplying satellites to researchers for tests in Italy, France, Japan and China.

“In China,” he said, “scientists already have made CARNA 5 a major technology for protecting 25,000 acres of tomatoes and other crops—and they’re about to triple that area. In Italy and Japan, other large tests are going on.”

Kaper and colleagues, as well as scientists in China, France and Italy also are attempting to bioengineer tomatoes that hold satellite genes for controlling the disease, he added. “We’ve got bioengineered tomato plants in our greenhouse, but we suspect the ‘vaccine’ approach may work faster and will be cheaper.”

The first viral satellite was found in 1962 by British scientist B. Kassanis. ARS researcher I. R. Schneider (deceased) found the second one at Beltsville in 1969. In 1976, Kaper discovered the third one, a CARNA 5, the first satellite known to modify the mischief caused by a crop disease.

While S-CARNA 5 curtails cucumber mosaic virus in tomatoes, some CARNA 5 strains cause an even worse disease, called necrosis, in the crop. Oddly, the same strain of CARNA 5 that gives tomatoes a fatal case of necrosis will protect other crops susceptible to the virus, he said.

“CARNA 5 is like a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,” he said. “In the Italian epidemic, much of the damage actually is caused by an evil Mr. Hyde strain of CARNA 5 that was naturally present. But the S-CARNA 5 strain we tested is a non-necrotic, beneficial Dr. Jekyll that doesn’t harm tomato plants.”

In explaining viral satellites at scientific seminars, Kaper often resorts to a rhyme familiar to many students of parasitology:

“Great fleas have little fleas upon their backs to bite ‘em,
And little fleas have lesser fleas, and so ad infinitum. ”

“S-CARNA 5 is a perfect example of one of those ‘lesser fleas,’” he said. “Since the cucumber mosaic virus itself is a parasite, that makes S-CARNA 5 a parasite of a parasite.”

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YEUTTER ANNOUNCES CORN AND GRAIN SORGHUM DECISION

WASHINGTON, Jan. 2—Secretary of Agriculture Clayton Yeutter announced today he is exercising, for the 1991 crop only, his discretionary authority under the 1990 Farm Act to provide for fair and equitable establishment of corn and grain sorghum bases.

“The 1990 Act separates corn and sorghum bases and, in so doing, unintentionally takes away flexibility that producers of these commodities had under the 1985 Farm Act. Previously producers could plant corn or grain sorghum on a combined corn and grain sorghum base. The 1990 Act, however, establishes separate bases. I am using my discretionary authority to return this flexibility to those producers for 1991,” Yeutter said.

“In order to permanently correct this situation, I urge the Congress to restore fully the authority to combine the feed grain bases for crop years beyond 1991.”

In 1991 producers who enroll in the feed grain price support and production adjustment program will have until the certification date established for corn and grain sorghum to declare which portion of the farm's crop acreage is planted to either crop. This reported acreage will be used in establishing 1992 crop acreage bases, which will be established in the same way as for all other 1992 program crops.

Yeutter continued, “In addition we have learned that some producers would like to give up excess base in light of the ‘triple base’ requirement and the calculation of the acreage reduction requirements under the commodity programs on the farm's crop acreage bases rather than the planted acreage as was the case under the provisions of the 1985 Act. Therefore, under the same authority, a one-time crop acreage base forfeiture will be allowed at the request of producers.”

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